

Observer: Fuller Oriental Explanations

By RUSSELL BAKER

WASHINGTON, May 4—And now, gentlemen, everything should be perfectly clear. Are there any questions?

Q. In his speech President Nixon suggests that the United States has never been defeated in a war. I understand the British Army captured Washington in the War of 1812, burnt down both the Capitol and the White House and sent President and Mrs. Madison running for their lives. If that isn't being defeated, what is?

A. Shut up. Are there any more questions?

Q. Yes. I was surprised to learn, just at the moment we were invading them, that the Parrot's Beak and the Fishhook existed. Are there any other danger spots with colorful names like these of which I should be aware?

A. Only one. In addition to the Parrot's Beak and the Fishhook, there is the extremely dangerous Horse's Mouth. It is an undulating swampy area bounded on the north by the White House and on the South by the Pentagon. This is the only area in the world heavily infested with people who are certain they know what is going on in Southeast Asia.

Q. Herbert G. Klein, White House communications direc-

tor, says that a private poll shows that 65 per cent of 1,025 scientifically selected persons support the President's action, that 22 per cent oppose it and that 13 per cent have no opinion. My question is this: What is a White House communications director?

A. A White House communications director is a person smart enough to know that if you take a poll immediately after a President has spoken about anything on television, 65 per cent of all scientifically selected persons will support whatever the President proposes to do; particularly if the President says this is the only way to keep the United States from becoming "a second-rate power."

Q. But 13 per cent had no opinion. How can a scientifically selected person have no opinion?

The Only One With the Facts

A. If you had listened to Vice President Agnew Friday night you would not ask such dumb questions. As Mr. Agnew pointed out, persons who disagree with the President—even if they are decently motivated—must realize that the President is the only person who has all the facts needed to form a sound judgment. Per-

sons who had no opinion in the poll probably reasoned that having an opinion would be incompetent on their part, and a waste of time.

Q. Are you saying—pardon me, is Mr. Klein saying, then, that 65 per cent of the population are such dolts that they approve expanding the war, even though they cannot possibly have all the facts needed to form an opinion worth having?

A. I'm not going to get bogged down in numbers. All Mr. Klein suggests is that the President's support is heavy—even if incompetently informed—while his opposition is only light to moderate. Public-opinionwise, the President has turned the corner, seen light at the end of the tunnel and nailed the old coonskin to the wall.

Q. I am the younger brother of a soldier in Vietnam, and I was very happy when the President said that invading Cambodia would give us younger brothers a chance to grow up in a world of peace, freedom and justice. My older brother is nineteen, going on twenty . . .

A. Would you get to the point, Shorty?

Q. Well, it's this: I'm now thirteen. When my older

brother who is now in Vietnam was thirteen, he had an older brother in Vietnam. This was back in 1964. I was seven then. My older brother who is now in Vietnam was then thirteen, and his older brother was nineteen, going on twenty. Well my older brother—the thirteen-year-old of 1964—was called to a meeting just like this one, and they explained that his older brother was going into Vietnam so that he—the older brother's younger brother—would have a chance to grow up in a world of peace and freedom and justice.

The Human Pentagon

A. Unfortunately for your older brother, that turned out to be in error. Does that answer your question, son? To err is human, especially in the Pentagon. Keep that in mind the next time one of these campus bums tells you how inhuman the Pentagon is. Keep it in mind until you're nineteen, going on twenty, and you won't be too surprised if you turn up in Southeast Asia, fighting halfway around the world, not for territory, not for glory but so that your younger brother can have a chance to grow up in a world of peace and freedom and justice. In the meantime, keep laughing.